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Transcendental Learning: A Review

Barry Andrews

John P. Miller, *Transcendental Learning: The Educational Legacy of Alcott, Emerson, Fuller, Peabody and Thoreau*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2011. 137p.

The quality of education in our schools and ways to improve it are getting a lot of attention in the media these days, and rightly so. Most of this attention is focused on the elements of a common core curriculum and the methods of assessing students' performance. Much of this discussion begs the broader questions of the purpose of education and the best methods of achieving it. It might seem unfashionable to the point of irrelevance to suggest that the Transcendentalists have something to contribute to the current debate, but educator John P. Miller doesn't think so. Miller, Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, has written a slim but thoughtful volume on the topic of educational reform entitled *Transcendental Learning: The Educational Legacy of Alcott, Emerson, Fuller, Peabody and Thoreau*.

For all the breadth of their learning and their varied interests, it is important to recall that these pivotal figures of the American Renaissance were all teachers early in their careers, Emerson for five years, Thoreau for four, and Fuller for two (five more if one counts her famous Conversations). Alcott, who taught for a total of sixteen years, and Peabody, who taught for the same number, found their vocations as educators, writing treatises on teaching methods and advocating educational reforms. Miller examines the contributions, both practical and theoretical, of these writers to the discourse on education, giving attention to the particular genius—if we may use that favorite term of theirs—of each of them. Thoreau's genius lay in nature studies, Fuller's in the education of women, Alcott's in nurturing children's spiritual growth, and so on.

In Miller's reading, Emerson faulted the education of his time for being unnecessarily fragmented and utilitarian, oriented to the needs of a growing market economy. Miller quotes from Emerson's essay "Education":

We do not teach [boys] to aspire to be all they can. We

do not give them a training as if we believed in their noble nature. We scarce educate their bodies. We do not train the eye and the hand. We exercise their understandings to the apprehension and comparison of some facts, to a skill in numbers, in words; we aim to make them accountants, attorneys, engineers; but not to make able, earnest, great-hearted men. The great object of Education should be commensurate with the object of life. It should be a moral one; to teach self-trust: to inspire the youthful man with an interest in himself; with a curiosity touching his own nature; to acquaint him with the resources of his mind, and to teach him that there is all his strength, and inflame him with a piety towards the Great Mind in which he lives.¹

Here Emerson argues that education is partial and piecemeal, focused on getting a living rather than making a life. Education should be geared to developing the whole person and cultivating curiosity, character, and self-confidence. He also believed that education is essentially spiritual in nature. As he noted in his journal, "Education is drawing out the Soul."²

Bronson Alcott held similar views and, as noted, had many more years' experience implementing them in the schools where he taught, most especially the noted Temple School in Boston where he had the assistance of both Elizabeth Peabody and Margaret Fuller. A practical educator as well as a thoughtful one, he introduced reforms in teaching that are more or less taken for granted today. At a time when rote learning was the preferred method of instruction, Alcott took an inductive approach, adopting the practices of Socratic questioning and inquiry-based investigation. Introspection and writing skills were developed by means of keeping journals and composing autobiographies. In keeping with his inductive methods, Alcott employed a conversational model of teaching. He had his students sit in a semi-circle so that they

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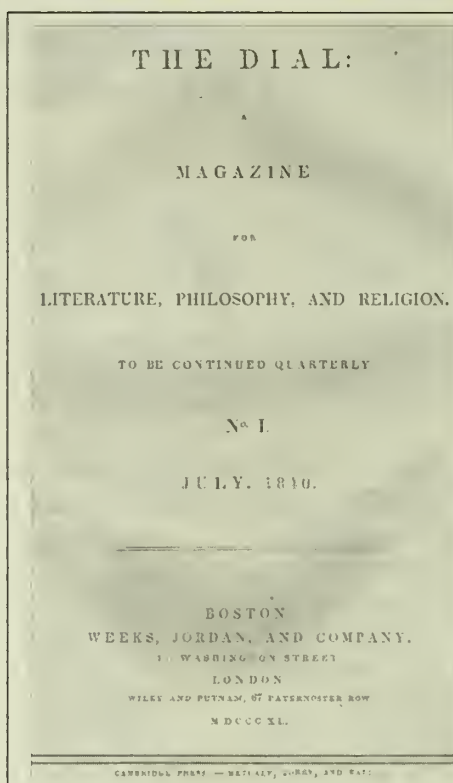
part of the Thoreau Society's collections of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*. Written by Elizabeth Hall Witherell, the Editor-in-Chief of the Princeton Edition, to members of the Princeton Edition Editorial Board—with whom (as with me) she had already discussed the main issues and evidence—it laid out the reasons for removing the “Preaching of Buddha” from the galleys of *Translations*—the book was being set in type when Witherell began to be suspicious about the attribution to Thoreau—and let the Board know what Witherell thought and what research she had done up to that point. Significantly, when the memo was sent, she had not yet discovered the most significant evidence, Cooke's re-attribution, to Peabody, later in the same issue of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*:

This translation appeared anonymously in the January 1844 number of *The Dial* (IV: 391-401). A composite of passages from two articles published in *La Revue Indépendante* in April and May 1843 (“Fragments des Prédications de Buddha,” April 25, 1843; “Considérations sur l'Origine du Bouddhisme, par M. Burnouf,” May 25, 1843), it was attributed by George Willis Cooke in an article in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* in

July 1885 (“‘The Dial’; an Historical and Biographical Introduction with a List of the Contributors,” XIX: 225-265). Samuel Arthur Jones gave it to Thoreau in his 1894 bibliography, and Cooke's *Historical and Biographical Introduction* to the Rowfant Club reprint of *The Dial* in 1902 repeated the attribution from his earlier article. However, I can find no evidence to support this attribution, and I suspect that Elizabeth Peabody is the translator.

Thoreau does not mention working on “Buddha” in the *Journal* or correspondence extant from 1843, and the commonplace books he was using contain no material from it, and I have not been able to establish where he might have seen the *Revue*. He made no corrections in the piece in his own copy of *The Dial*, and Kevin has found no attribution for the piece in the copies at Harvard (Emerson's, Sibley's, Ward's, and Alcott's). The Library of Congress copy annotated by Emerson is reported to give Emerson and the University of Michigan copy owned by Thornton, Daniel Ricketson, and Walton Ricketson, has a note by Jones that reads “Elizabeth P. Peabody (Jones) / ascribed by Cooke to Thoreau.” [Added in pencil at this point: * Sanborn's copy at Wells College has no attribution.]

Supporting the notion of Emerson's



First issue of *The Dial*

Source: The Walter Harding Collection
(The Thoreau Society Collections
at the Thoreau Institute at Walden
Woods)

involvement is the existence in his journal for late 1843 of a passage translated from one of the *Revue* articles—the passage is not in *The Dial* but occurs just above a section that is part of “Buddha” (JMN IX, 58). Since Emerson is known to have helped make selections for other of the Ethnical Scripture pieces, he may be assigning the translations to himself in that capacity in the Library of Congress copy.

Jones's attribution and a sentence in a letter from Charles Lane to Isaac Hecker are the strongest pieces of evidence I have for thinking that “Buddha” is the work of Peabody. In December 1900 and January 1901, Jones wrote A. W. Hosmer about “Buddha” and several other Ethnical Scriptures, noting that he attributed them to Thoreau in his bibliography[,] that he had just discovered that Emerson attributed all of them to himself, and that he had tried unsuccessfully to jog Cooke's memory about the matter (Oehlschlaeger and Hendrick, *Toward the Making of Thoreau's Modern Reputation*, letters 397 and 398). In early 1901 he seems reasonably satisfied that Thoreau was the translator, yet he later adds the attribution to Peabody in the Michigan

copy of *The Dial*; he must have found some evidence for this, though I don't know what it was.

The letter from Lane to Hecker written December 29, 1843, is less mysterious. The typescript at the Paulist Archives in New York City reads: “While you have been reading some of the Buddhist books I find that Miss Peabody has been doing the same in French and translating them for the *Dial* if Mr. Emerson approves.” An additional piece of circumstantial evidence is that Peabody ran a bookstore in Boston that sold foreign publications; she would almost certainly have had access to the *Revue*. (Of course, she could also have provided it to Thoreau or Emerson.)

I have checked with Eleanor Tilton for Emerson-Peabody letters that might refer to this and found that there are none. The fall 1843 correspondence printed by Rusk gives no clues. I contacted Joel Myerson, who attributed the piece to Thoreau with a question mark in his dissertation, in an article in *Studies in Bibliography*, and in *The New England Transcendentalists and the “Dial”*; he had no new information, but sent me to Margaret Neussendorfer, who is doing a biography of Peabody. Margaret will check her files and get in touch with me next week if she finds anything. In addition, Richard Reed at the

Fruitlands Museum is checking Lane letters for fall 1843. Finally, I'll get in touch with George Hendrick to see if he can help me discover why Jones changed his mind about who translated the piece.

The question is whether we have enough evidence against Thoreau's involvement to remove the essay from *Translations* now, before galleys are set. We're not expecting galleys until September, but I'd want to make the change as soon as possible. Any more information would be a great help. (John [Broderick]—could you have someone check the DLC copy to confirm Emerson's attribution? Thanks.)

This memo suggests that matters are a bit more complicated than the footnote in the Princeton Edition suggests. First, direct evidence of Thoreau's knowledge of and/or translation of the piece is considered, and we are told that nothing was found linking him to the two French source articles by Eugène Burnouf in *La Revue Indépendante* in April and May of 1843. Moreover, textually relevant copies of the *Dial* either make no claim that Thoreau was the translator, or in two cases, attribute the translation either to Emerson or to Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. The last two possibilities reinforce broader expectations and patterns. Thus, a "Preaching of Buddha" translated by Ralph Waldo Emerson reflects his habitual editorial role with reference to the "Ethnical Scriptures" in the *Dial*. He certainly knew the sources in Burnouf's articles, since (as the memo notes) he quoted from an adjacent part of one of them in his *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*. His hand in selecting other "ethnical scriptures" for the *Dial* is also noted by Witherell. Similarly, Samuel Arthur Jones's later belief that the attribution to Peabody in the Michigan copy of the *Dial*, like Charles Lane's contemporary 1843 declaration in a letter written to Isaac Hecker that the translation was by Peabody, though it had been assigned to her by Emerson, also reinforces our vision of her as a somewhat self-effacing polymath. Other sources in Emerson's correspondence are being explored even as Witherell writes, but it is at present dubious that there is enough evidence to come to a decision.

In this context, the discovery of Cooke's corrigenda declaring Peabody to be the translator was a godsend, since it allowed the resolution of the matter of authorship by the preponderance of the facts available, letting the Princeton Edition come to a decision to remove "The Preaching of Buddha" from the volume before *Translations* went into galleys. I am still not in disagreement with this decision, though I am not so sure that we explained the decanonization of this work very well. At the least, a longer note or a separate publication about the authorship of "The Preaching of Buddha" should have been written. (Witherell thinks we should have done the latter.) The footnote in *Translations* above does a poor job of explaining the diversity of opinion in the nineteenth century about who the translator really was, or even why Cooke's reversal of position should decide the issue. It also misrepresents the thought process by which we came to our assessment of the question of authorship here—it was certainly not a simple matter of one piece of evidence appearing and resolving the matter completely, but rather, of it tipping the decision in favor of exclusion. Although the notes in the Princeton Edition are direct and to the point, with little room for digression, here we have one

that does not articulate its point sufficiently to inform the reader.

Notes

¹ *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau: Translations*, ed. K. P. Van Anglen (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986), 159, n. 1.

² Joel Myerson, *The New England Transcendentalists and the "Dial"* (Rutherford NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), 11.

³ Myerson, 11, 13.

Thoreau's Careful Artistry in the Poem "Smoke"¹

Sally P. Hansen

Of the couple hundred poems Henry David Thoreau wrote, few have remained over the years among the handful still regarded as significant and worthy of attention.² Despite Thoreau's meager poetic output and the negative reactions his poems inspired in Emerson and later critics, "Smoke" deserves closer study for the light it throws on Thoreau's conscious artistry. "Smoke" first saw the light of day in *The Dial* (April, 1843) where it was printed with another short poem, "Haze," under the more general title "Orphics." In "Smoke," we see Thoreau, the poet-naturalist, fascinated by the qualities of one basic element in nature. Smoke is an intermediate form, hovering between a solid and gaseous state, an intermediary between earth and skies, earth and the sun. The one-sentence "Smoke" describes a pillar of smoke rising from the poet's hearth in a series of images ending in a command to the smoke to rise upward as the poet's incense and ask the gods to pardon his clear flame—his uncluttered existence, his individuality, his own work on earth below.

The poem is divided in terms of its imagery into three parts: In lines 1–4 the image of the journey—the flight upward—of a bird is developed. As smoke ascends in its upward flight it becomes an "Icarian bird." Icarus, the defiant boy of Greek legend, disobeyed his father's orders and flew too close to the sun. His waxen wings being melted by the heat, Icarus plummeted into the sea and drowned. The Icarian bird image in the first two lines of the poem is a good illustration of Thoreau's skillful use of paradox. The smoke, though its wings appear to be melted by the sun as were Icarus's, does not fall to the earth but continues its ascent toward the heavens. In the next two lines Thoreau, the student of Greek myth, has been supplanted by Thoreau, the keen-eyed naturalist. The bird image is further developed as the smoke rises like a bird circling above its nest, but now the Icarian bird has been transformed into a lark. Why should the smoke be likened to a "lark without song?" Did the author of *Walden* know that the song of the lark is often "long-sustained, and sometimes given high in the air in the manner of the European Skylark?"³ The American horned lark is famous for its flight song which is often heard when the bird is out of sight in the sky. Did Thoreau choose to make his pillar of smoke resemble the lark because of the connotation of soaring flight? Given Thoreau's knowledge of birds, this would seem to be a plausible explanation. In these first four lines of the poem, words that emphasize the metaphor of the journey are also used to describe the spiraling upward of smoke from the poet's hearth. The symbol of the bird suggested by words such as "nest,"

"lark," "pinions," "song," "light-winged," and "Icarian bird" is blended with more general words describing a journey—"upward flight," "messenger," and "circling."

In the second part of the poem, lines 5–8, the imagery changes, providing a contrast and a foil to the first four lines. The emphasis shifts from the upward flight of a bird to a dark, shadowy, undefined form. In contrast to the concreteness of the imagery in the opening lines the words in lines 5–8 are vague and generalized. A vague, ethereal quality is developed with "dream," "shadowy," and "vision," while darkness is emphasized with the poet's use of the words "midnight," "night," "darkening" and "blotting out." The dark is contrasted with the words "star," "day," "light," and "sun" and the combined word "star-veiling" completes the contrast of light and shadow. The wraithlike, sinuous column of smoke also takes on a feminine form in these lines in contrast to the Icarian boy image found in the first four lines of the poem. The "shadowy form . . . gathering up thy skirts" is fairly suggestive of an elusive, moving, changing woman. Was Thoreau a girl watcher as well as a bird watcher? He certainly had occasion to watch the women in his household and on the streets of Concord as they moved about in their long skirts. Thoreau's use of the word "veiling" in the phrase "star-veiling," coming as it does in these same lines, creates and sustains the feminine quality of the image.

Lines 9–10 make up the third and final portion of the poem. These concluding lines provide the central thought and command of the poem—that the smoke from the poet's hearth rise up as a message to the gods asking them to pardon the poet's clear flame, his individuality, as his work remains below on earth purged of its smoky impurities. These thought-provoking lines represent the summation of the poem, the "height" of wisdom the poet manages to attain in the course of the poem, the pinnacle that all his elaborately developed imagery was intended to lead up to. They also portray the poet as one who has defied the gods to pursue his poetic artistry.

Keeping in mind the image of Icarus in the first section, these closing lines demonstrate Thoreau's deliberate construction. If Thoreau, whose knowledge of classical literature is well-documented, used the Icarian figure to suggest the melting-while-rising quality of smoke, was he also thinking of Icarus as a symbol of boyish defiance? Was this one more picture and mood that Thoreau was trying to suggest when he caused his pillar of smoke to resemble an Icarian bird? It would seem to be a suggestion that cannot be ignored. Turning from the Icarian figure in the first line of the poem to the "clear flame" in the last, we find another instance in which Thoreau's knowledge of classical literature may have suggested to him a story in Greek mythology that would lend an added dimension to his poem describing smoke. In the last two lines of the poem Thoreau commands the smoke—his incense—to rise up and ask the gods to pardon the clear flame on his hearth on earth below. Was it Thoreau's intention to reinforce in the last lines a mood or feeling of defiance he set in motion in the first line? Did he mean to begin and end on the same note?

In order to get some notion of what mood Thoreau might have wanted to suggest in these lines we need to ask what else Henry Thoreau was busying himself with at the time he wrote this poem. Interestingly enough, Walter Harding tells us that in January of 1843, which is quite plausibly the very time when he was putting the finishing touches to his poem "Smoke," Emerson asked Thoreau to do a translation of *Prometheus Bound* from the

Smoke

Henry David Thoreau

Light-winged smoke, Icarian bird,
Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight,
Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,
Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;
Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form
Of midnight vision, gathering up thy skirts;
By night star-veiling, and by day
Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;
Go thou my incense upward from this hearth,
And ask the Gods to pardon this clear flame.

[April 1843 *Dial*, pp. 505–06]

Greek.⁴ The resulting work may have served to refresh Thoreau's memory of the Prometheus story and suggest the last lines of his poem "Smoke." Now the question of defiance in the poem is blended with the question, why should the gods be asked to pardon a clear flame? Was Thoreau thinking of Prometheus who stole fire from the gods and gave it to mortals, thus incurring the wrath of Zeus? It was Prometheus who cut up an ox and divided it into good meat disguised to look worthless and a pile of bones and fat tricked up to look like good meat. When Zeus was invited to choose between the lots, he was infuriated to discover he had been tricked into choosing the worthless lot. Thereafter, according to the story, only fat and bones were burned to the gods upon the altars of men, and men kept the good meat for themselves.⁵ Are these deeds of Prometheus what Thoreau had in mind when he wrote "Go thou my incense upward from this hearth, / And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame"?⁶ These last lines of the poem may illustrate Thoreau's ability to blend his knowledge of classical literature with his desire to body forth the fascinations of the world of nature.

Other examples of Thoreau's craftsmanship may be found in this creation of verticality, defiance, and smoke. His use of present participles—"melting," "circling," "departing," "gathering," "veiling," "darkening," "blotting," one of which is to be found in six out of the ten lines of the poem—gives the piece continuity and a sense of things interconnected and in motion. Of the four lines containing no present participles, one is the opening line and two others are the last lines of the poem. The poet confined his verbs of motion to the interior of the poem. Finally, the very first word of the poem, "Light," and the last, "flame," help to focus our attention on the central thought and imagery of the poem—the light-winged smoke wafting upward and the poet's Promethean clear flame on earth below—and to remind us of its firm but delicate structure.

In July of 1841 in a letter to his friend Mrs. Lucy Brown, Henry Thoreau wrote:

I dream of looking abroad summer and winter,
with free gaze, from some mountain-side . . . I to be
nature looking into nature with such easy sympathy
as the blue-eyed grass in the meadow looks in the
face of the sky. From some such recess I would put
forth sublime thoughts daily, as the plant puts forth

leaves. Now-a-nights I go on to the hill to see the sun set, as one would go home at evening; the bustle of the village has run on all day, and left me quite in the rear; but I see the sunset, and find that it can wait for my slow virtue.

But I forget that you think more of this human nature than of this nature I praise. Why won't you believe that mine is more human than any single man or woman can be? that in it, in the sunset there, are all the qualities that can adorn a household, and that sometimes, in a fluttering leaf, one may hear all your Christianity preached.⁷

In this letter we get a glimpse of the Thoreau that emerges from "Smoke"—the man who enjoyed viewing the sky from some hilltop, who found solace and serenity in nature, and who found the qualities of human nature in nature itself. Yet can we trust his statement about his mode of composition—that he would "put forth sublime thoughts daily, as the plant puts forth leaves?" Thoreau was to state his belief in the organic theory of composition frequently and sometimes dramatically. In another letter to Mrs. Lucy Brown in the same year, Thoreau described himself as a hurler of poetic bolts into the blue:

You ask if I have written any more poems? Excepting those which Vulcan is now forging, I have only discharged a few more bolts into the horizon,—in all, three hundred verses,—and sent them, as I may say, over the mountains to Miss Fuller.⁸

If this or the foregoing letter give an accurate picture of Thoreau the inspired poet dashing off his lines in a fury or permitting mystic and sublime murmurings to well up from somewhere inside as a "plant puts forth leaves," then the foregoing analysis of "Smoke" is beside the point. There was no conscious artistry, no plan, no care expended in the writing of the poem.

Yet in the *Collected Poems of Henry Thoreau*, Carl Bode painstakingly enumerates the variant versions of Thoreau's poems and Thoreau's many references and allusions to classical and English literature. Bode even cites evidence to indicate that one of Thoreau's poems, "Sometimes I hear the veery's clarion," "not only failed to grow like a plant—Thoreau found it ready-made in the prose of someone else." Bode concludes that Thoreau's method of writing poetry is inconsistent with "his theory of organic unity."⁹ It would appear to be unwise to put too much reliance on Thoreau's descriptions of the creative process. Given the evidence to be found of careful, conscious artistry in the manuscripts of Thoreau's poems, we may safely conclude that the following description of poetry-in-process to be found in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* is colorful but untrustworthy:

When the poetic frenzy seizes us, we run and scratch with our pen, intent only on worms, calling our mates around us, like the cock, and delighting in the dust we make, but do not detect where the jewel lies, which, perhaps, we have in the mean time cast to a distance, or quite covered up again.¹⁰

"Smoke," regardless of Thoreau's theories of poetic composition, would seem to be ample evidence of the care Thoreau

exercised in creating his own poems.

Notes

¹ Sally Hansen's analysis of "Smoke" turned up as the Hansens culled their files in preparing to move to a retirement home. She wrote this paper in 1968 for UW-Madison English Professor Harry Clark's graduate course, Modern American Poets, as she prepared to return to teaching.

² See Elizabeth Hall Witherell, "Thoreau as poet," *The Cambridge Companion to Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Joel Myerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 58 and n. 5. Witherell lists "Smoke" as among the best of "only a few" of Thoreau's verse productions that "are remarkable as poetry."

³ R. T. Peterson, *A Field Guide to the Birds* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), 156.

⁴ Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 117.

⁵ Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (Boston: Penguin, 1942), 70.

⁶ Hyatt H. Waggoner, *American Poets from the Puritans to the Present* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), 116.

⁷ Henry David Thoreau, *The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Walter Harding and Carl Bode (New York: New York University Press 1958), 45.

⁸ *Correspondence*, 47.

⁹ Carl Bode (ed.), *Collected Poems of Henry Thoreau* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), 338. For discussions of Thoreau's methods and aspirations as a poet, see Witherell, "Thoreau's Watershed Season as a Poet: The Hidden Fruits of the Summer and Fall of 1841," in *Studies in the American Renaissance* 1990, pp. 49–106; Fred W. Lorch, "Thoreau and the Organic Principle of Poetry," *PMLA* 53 (March 1938): 286–302; Paul O. Williams, "The Concept of Inspiration in Thoreau's Poetry," *PMLA* 79 (1964): 466–72; and Williams, "Thoreau's Growth as a Transcendental Poet," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 19 (1973): 189–98.

¹⁰ Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau: A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, ed. Carl F. Hovde, William L. Howarth, and Elizabeth Witherell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 342.

Call for Proposals

Thoreau Panel at Northeast Modern Language Association (NEMLA) Conference

Boston, MA, March 21-24, 2013

See <http://nemla.org/convention/2013/>

for full details.

Metaphysical Dirt: Teaching Thoreau Outside

This panel offers teachers an opportunity to reflect upon effective strategies and practices within or outside of the classroom for teaching Thoreau through a multi-disciplinary lens. Papers that describe challenging students through practical engagement with Thoreau's wide array of practices and corpus of texts are encouraged. Send 200-300 word abstracts to Kurt Moellering at kurt.moellering@thoreausociety.org by October 10.

Call for Papers

Thoreau Society Bulletin

Thoreau as a Mystic, Transcendentalist, Natural Philosopher, Writer, and Citizen/Activist.

The Thoreau Society seeks to include in *The Thoreau Society Bulletin* over the next several numbers a variety of short pieces celebrating Thoreau's legacy, in recognition of the sesquicentennial of Thoreau's death in 1862.

Short articles by scholars and enthusiasts are welcome on five themes encompassing the main fields of thought and action in which Thoreau's legacy is widely perceived. Three of those come from his famous self-definition: "The fact is I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot." In addition, most readers would acknowledge Thoreau's importance as writer and as citizen. Other broad themes and definitions may be important, but these are a handy bunch on which to hang an array of celebratory reflections.

Submissions on the order of 400–1,000 words are invited—we are looking for personal "takes" on Thoreau, overviews, and pithy summaries rather than detailed excursions supported with secondary sources. Should initial efforts inspire longer treatment (citations allowed but not required here), longer submissions on these themes are welcome for *The Concord Saunterer*.

In this edition of the *Bulletin*, we are pleased to run Brianne Keith's "Thoreau's Mysticism" as the inaugural entry in this series. See article below.

Thoreau's Mysticism

Brianne Keith

The mystic seeks communion: with the divine, with truth, with the "whole." Emerson's transparent eyeball, which has shed its material existence on a "bare common," is that being the mystic becomes at the end of its journey—no longer exactly human, a being with bodily "sense," and all of the well-worn tracks of perception given by and generated from a human body, but something left only with sense of the ever-moving and generative spring of existence.

Some call Emerson's mysticism a "nature mysticism," a mysticism achieved through union with the natural world so that inner and outer visions merge to produce a unified vision that "sees all" through the symbols of the natural world. There are, of course, other mystics in the great tradition of mysticism: Jesus, Buddha,

St. Teresa of Avila, Rumi, among others. They all lose material sense as they merge with the divine, though they describe the experience in different terms. St. Teresa tells us in the state of union with the divine "there is no sense of anything...only fruition," and of the "graces bestowed by Him," some personal divine. How does Thoreau fit in this great line of mystics?

Thoreau was a self-professed mystic, notably listing it first in a litany of titles that try to capture his amorphous identity: "The fact is I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot." Currently we still seem to settle on a categorical divide between the empirical and the transcendental, the scientist and the mystic. Thoreau, often cast as a figure starting out transcendental and then becoming more empirical as his mind and work matured in age, offers a complicated mixture of the two modes.

His Kalendar work, one of his final gestures—to distill a material catalogue of daily events in the natural world into a representative "year"; a catalogue retaining specificity but cast in the enduring terms—is an attempt to balance the two modes in that generative capsule that myth offers to the ages. In this way, Thoreau will create a holder for the nature mystic's experience, a "dish outside the window that holds the rain," so to speak, that he surely felt while examining the natural world with the observer's eye, day after day, year after year. Thoreau was searching for this type of mythic framework from the beginning of his career. "Even Christ," Thoreau tells us in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, "had his scheme, his conformity to tradition, which slightly vitiates his teaching." Thoreau resists scheme. "Your scheme," he advises, "must be the framework of the universe."

Where Emerson turns to Nature to become the mystic, Thoreau, I find, turns to Nature to ground his mysticism. In Nature, Emerson is the eye, and Thoreau the brain. "The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things... My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills" he says in *Walden*. It was easy for Thoreau to lose his self, his sympathetic lockjaw being a good example. This quality seemed to be a central part of his personality. He turns to his mind, his intellect, to do the work of investigating nature. In his writing, his mysticism is given expression, his identity given shape.

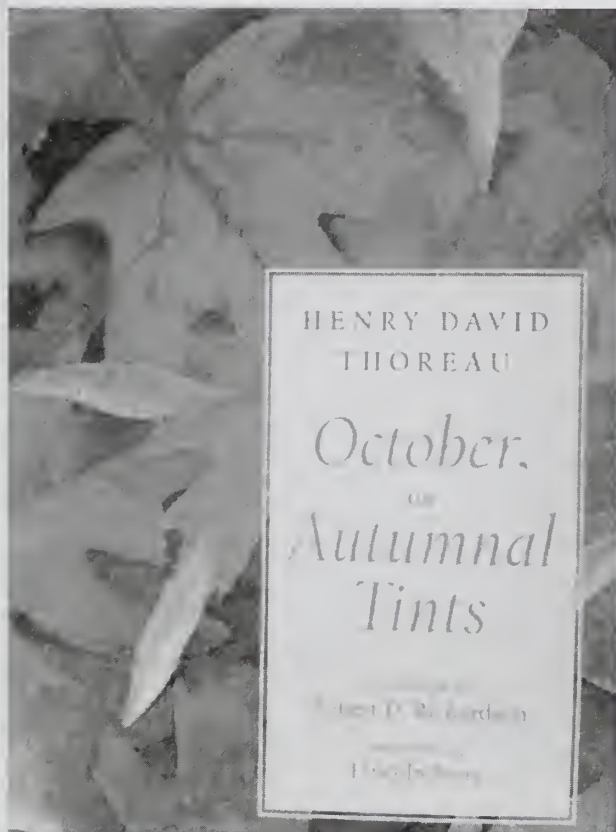
Reality—the here and now—is always the domain of the mystic. When Thoreau writes "I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born," he is mirroring the Zen koans, which try to shake us from old furrows of thought, by way of doubt, into contemplating the "here and now." "What is the sound of one hand clapping," a koan a Zen master might ask the student. So that we are not "shipwrecked on some vain reality," Thoreau asks us to consider how our lives "look poorest when [we] are richest," and thereby we become his students. His mysticism makes him the master.

This is the first in a series of short essays celebrating Thoreau's legacy, in recognition of the sesquicentennial of Thoreau's death in 1862. See the Call for Papers in this issue if you would like to enter the conversation about Thoreau's legacy as a mystic, Transcendentalist, natural philosopher, writer, or citizen/activist.

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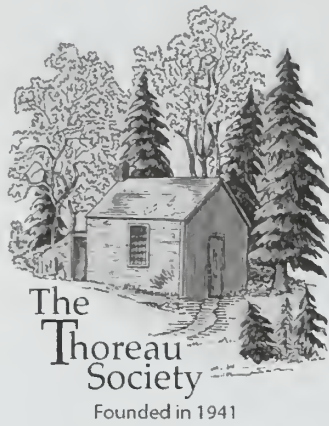
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Henry David Thoreau
 Maxham daguerrotype, 1856
Thoreau Society Collections
 at the Thoreau Institute
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Established in 1941, The Thoreau Society is the oldest and largest organization devoted to an American author. The Society has long contributed to the dissemination of knowledge about Thoreau by collecting books, manuscripts, and artifacts relating to Thoreau and his contemporaries, by encouraging the use of its collections, and by publishing articles in two Society periodicals: *The Thoreau Society Bulletin* and *The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies*.

Through an annual gathering in Concord, and through sessions devoted to Thoreau at the Modern Language Association's annual convention and the American Literature Association's annual conference, the Thoreau Society provides opportunities for all those interested in Thoreau – dedicated readers and followers, as well as the leading scholars in the field – to gather and share their knowledge of Thoreau and his times.

The Thoreau Society archives are housed at the Thoreau Institute's Henley Library in Lincoln, Massachusetts. This repository includes the collections of Walter Harding and Raymond Adams, two of the foremost authorities on Thoreau and founders of the Thoreau Society; and those of Roland Robbins, who uncovered Thoreau's Walden house site.

Thoreau Society members represent a wide range of professions, interests, and hometowns across the United States and around the world. They are connected by the conviction that Henry Thoreau had important things to say and crucial questions to ask that are just as significant in our time as in his. Our list of past Society presidents is a sampling of the kinds of people who have been attracted to Thoreau's writings and philosophies. Through its programs, publications and projects, the Thoreau Society is committed to exploring Thoreau's observations on living with self, society and nature, and encouraging people to think about how they live their own lives.

Mission:

The Thoreau Society exists to stimulate interest in and foster education about Thoreau's life, works, legacy and his place in his world and in ours, challenging all to live a deliberate, considered life.

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The Thoreau Society keeps Thoreau's writings and ideas alive across time and across generations.

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- To encourage research on Thoreau's life and works and to act as a repository for Thoreau-related materials
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- The Shop at Walden Pond and the Friends of Walden Pond in support of park programs and activities.

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Pages from a Thoreau Country Journal

J. Walter Brain

July 28, 2005

Set out on a saunter across Concord's Bedford Levels, at the core of the Great Fields, one of Thoreau's four Great Wild Tracts in his poetic vision of the Concord landscape, myself imbued with Thoreau's words from his essay on *Walking* "a man . . . in some spring of his life he saunters abroad into the Great Fields of thought, he, as it were, goes to grass like a horse and leaves all his harness behind in the stable." Hot, but drier, rather more pleasant weather has set in; the haze replaced by a transparency in the atmosphere that is a delight to gaze through, the soft blue of the sky soothing any cramped sinews in body or mind. At these ample, open levels, nothing compares to the beauty and solace of the sky, splendid and serene. At times, though, aircraft from nearby Hanscom Field fly over insufferably, the jet exhaust besmirching the blue, engine noise smiting the country air. How shall I confess to field crickets—I hear their faint chirping now—that I, too, fly in those machines?

Former farm fields and meadows spread out in the luxury of wild tall grasses, sedges, forbs, and weeds, vegetable mire that a thrifty farmer may not care for, but whose yield of seed will furnish the winter larder for wildlife. Most of these herbaceous plants, typical of abandoned fields in New England, also crowd along hedgerows, roadsides, and in waste places, and appear to be predominantly alien, few native plants surviving in their midst. As I set along a cart path, a dense hedgerow to my left, with fields and meadows opening to both sides, I come across on either hand the likes of Poison Hemlock, *Conium maculatum*, blooming in broad white umbels, an Old World plant that mingles with Water-hemlock or Musquash-root, *Cicuta maculata*, a native species. Other alien plants in the same Parsley family include Queen Anne's Lace or Wild Carrot, *Daucus carota*, the laciest of the *Umbelliferae*, and Wild Parsnip, *Pastinaca sativa*, with umbels blooming yellow, very common in these levels.

Striding along, I pause often to pick from hedgerow brambles ripe and juicy red raspberries and blackberries, just right for a hot summer saunter, the fruit fresh and sweet. A wasp's sting comes with the territory. Common Tansy, *Tanacetum vulgare*, a welcome alien, yields a sunshine-filled button-like yellow bloom with a tangy scent. Ranks of our native Boneset, *Eupatorium perfoliatum*, bloom in flat-topped white clusters, a thoroughwort with distinctive connate-perfoliate leaves. Come by goldenrods galore, few in flower as yet, mainly Canada Goldenrod, *Solidago canadensis*, with sharply serrated leaves crowded on the stems, Sweet Goldenrod, *Solidago odora*, with the anis-like scent its leaves yield when crushed, and the Late Goldenrod, *Solidago gigantea*, already in flower despite its tardy name. What else? The Bull Thistle, *Cirsium vulgare*, also an alien, tall and fully armored with stout spines on leaf, stem, and flower bract. Meadowsweet, *Spiraea latifolia*, blooming light pink, and Steeplebush, *Spiraea tomentosa*, in purple-red, are both native spiraeas, a genus in the Rose family. Native too, Spotted Joe-Pye-Weed, *Eupatorium maculatum*, now breaking into a soft purple bloom. Alien invasive Purple Loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, together with our own native



House Wrens

John Caffrey / Original Watercolor for *Thoreau Society Bulletin*

aster-like Daisy Fleabane, *Erigeron annuus*, spread unchecked over every abandoned meadow.

The farm hedgerows, besides furnishing berries from brambles smothered in a jungle of buckthorn, honeysuckle, bittersweet, and our own native sumacs and grapevines, yield their share of bird song from goldfinches, catbirds, mockingbirds, sparrows, finches, and an occasional robin caroling in the bush—common fare that I do not seem to tire of sharing my day with. I watch a pair of House Wrens, *Troglodytes aedon*, nesting residents, come out of a dense thicket into the light, the birds perhaps responding to my whistling. Light brown above, whitish below, and the plainest, unmarked face in the wren tribe, but for a thin eye-ring, signal these unpretentious and homely house wrens. One of the wrens intones for me a pretty lay in rapid, vibrant trills.

Monarch Butterflies, *Danaus plexippus*, exceedingly rare this year, give chase to one another, in two or three flying pairs, if I am not repeating count. Monarchs lack the transversal veining of Viceroy Butterflies, *Basilarchia archippus*, but a readier identification clue in the field may prove the pale hue of the underside of the monarch's wings when folded up. The viceroys retain the deep orange hue on the underside of the wings. How not take delight in encountering by the Empidonax Meadow an Eastern Black Swallowtail, *Papilio polyxenes*, a female with dusky, starry wings, spotted blue on the hind wings.

Sauntering on, I turn into the hayfields of the old Nowalk Farm that border on the back marshes by Virginia Road. Recently mown, the sweet smell of cut English hay still pervades the air, the hay bundled in spiral bales scattered over the length of the

fields. Two stately Swamp White Oaks, *Quercus bicolor*, looking rather weather beaten and ragged at close quarters, separate the upper hayfield from what I have called the Peenting Ground, a slightly domed field above the Empidonax Meadow where American Woodcocks, *Philohela minor*, have been nesting from time immemorial. Formerly, tall Red Cedars, *Juniperus virginiana*, stood in a row alongside the two oaks, their demise a few years ago a mystery to me. Younger red cedars line the edge of the lower hayfield by the cattail marshes alongside it. I derive some satisfaction walking now on firm ground over these fields, high and dry in summer, for they tend to go damp and wet the rest of the year. Walk first along the field's sunny side, hot and stinging, earning relief, as it were, as I round the end of the field by a handsome aspen grove back up the shady side, made cooler yet by a gust of fresh air that has just come my way. A few Tree Swallows, *Iridoprocne bicolor*, swoop over the open country. One solitary American Crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, alights on the summit of one of the young red cedars across the field. Crows, an uncommon sight these days, do not appear to have recovered from the ravages of the West Nile virus epidemic, if indeed that proves to be the cause of the apparent dwindling in their numbers. Large roosts of crows have not been a common sight during the last two years or so. They will flap back into sight.



House Wren

Will Close / Original pen and ink for *Thoreau Society Bulletin*

Westward I Go Free: A Review

J. Parker Huber

Corinne Hosfeld Smith. *Westward I Go Free: Tracing Thoreau's Last Journey*. Winnipeg, Canada: Green Frigate Books, 2012. 456p.

Thoreau's journey of 11 May to 11 July 1861 with Horace Mann (age 17) from Massachusetts to Minnesota and back consumed the first two months of the naturalist's final year. This was Thoreau's longest excursion, several thousand miles mostly by train, some by steamship on the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, the Great Lakes, and a ferry across the St. Lawrence River.

In *Westward I Go Free*, Corinne H. Smith illuminates this expedition for the first time, and she does so with great depth, precision, and definitiveness. Her groundbreaking book dispels any notion that this journey was a waste of time, a withering of the life of the then consumptive Thoreau. Clearly, this trip was for more than health and healing. "Thoreau was prepared for this excursion to be a journey of discovery," Smith writes (114). And indeed it was for Henry and Horace, as she identifies them. Smith's insatiable curiosity, indefatigable inquiry in field and archive and interview

makes it one for us, too.

The first extended stop was Niagara Falls. Here Thoreau explored Goat Island, and "documented seeing 28 species: ten trees, two shrubs, and sixteen non-woody flowering plants" (101). Smith transcribes Thoreau's almost illegible field notes that tell us that he purchased "Trochees (2), 50 cents." By looking at newspapers of the day, Smith found ads for Brown's Bronchial Troches, which could cure "cough, cold, hoarseness, Influenza, any Irritation, or Soreness of the Throat, relieve the Hacking Cough in Consumption, Bronchitis, Asthma, and Catarrh" (94).

Not that Thoreau saw everything. After departing Niagara Falls, he and Horace traveled through Canada to the Midwest. Thoreau focused on Lake Ontario to the exclusion of the most prominent landscape feature, the now named Niagara Escarpment, which Smith too had initially missed on her first visit (2007) to the area but then recognized to her delight with the aid of Canadian friends.

Smith brings to life Thoreau's travels through southern Michigan from Detroit to Chicago by introducing two Michigan residents who were both ardent fans of the author of *Walden*: school teacher Calvin Greene of Rochester and physician Samuel Arthur Jones of Ann Arbor. Neither met Thoreau on this trip, although why Greene failed to do so remains a mystery. Jones did not move to the area until 1875. However, Smith reveals how each of the men contributed to elevating Thoreau's reputation.

While documenting how Thoreau and Mann traveled west from Chicago to Dunleith, Illinois, Smith tells us of herself and how this book came to be. "I got hooked on Henry when I was in tenth grade, back in southeastern Pennsylvania, when we read 'Civil Disobedience' in English Class" (179). But the real impetus for Smith came much later in the person of Thoreau scholar Edmund A. Schofield to whom the book is dedicated and who initially encouraged Smith to make the entire "Journey West" (185) in Thoreau's footsteps.

Thoreau and Mann settled a while in Minnesota, first in St. Anthony, Minneapolis and St. Paul, then at nearby lakes, which now lie within the city of Minneapolis. Finding "oak openings," clusters of mature oaks, in the prairie fascinated Thoreau, such as the one surrounding the original site of the University of Minnesota, now the East Bank campus, where bur oaks still thrive (237). Gophers were also new to him. During a blissful ten-day interlude at Elizabeth Hamilton's home on Lake Calhoun, Thoreau searched for the crab apple tree, whose "handsome rose-colored flowers" he thought he had seen crossing lake Michigan, but never confirmed close up. Smith pursues Henry step by step from the Hamilton home to the residence of Reverend Jonathan Fitch, who recommended that Thoreau and Mann seek out horticulturist Jonathan Taylor Grimes on whose farm Thoreau at last found wild crab apples. Back in Concord, Thoreau incorporated this discovery in his essay "Wild Apples" which appeared posthumously in the *Atlantic* of November 1862. At least this much of his journey he prepared for publication.

From St. Paul, Thoreau and Mann steamed 200 miles up the Minnesota River to Lower Sioux Agency at Redwood to witness the U.S. government's annuity payment to the Dakota people. Thoreau's contact with the Dakota was minimal—an afternoon council with speakers concluding with a dance—though somehow he left with "three pieces of Dakota buckskin clothing . . . dress, a shirt-jacket, and a pair of trousers," which Smith tells us now lie in the Concord Museum (266). Thoreau's canoe trips in Maine with Penobscot guides Joe Aitteon (1853) and Joe Polis (1857) thus remain his most

intimate and sustained relationships with Native Americans.

Leaving St. Paul on 23 June, Thoreau and his traveling companion began their two-week journey home by taking the Mississippi River southward. Their 27 June rail crossing of Wisconsin, from Prairie du Chien to Milwaukee, is enriched with associations Smith reveals. The train's stop in Madison brings up John Muir, a University of Wisconsin student, who began that same day his fifty-mile walk to his Portage home. (Earlier that year Muir had returned by train to Madison from Prairie du Chien where he had worked several months for an inventor). Ed Schofield unearthed this coincidence of the two naturalists, Muir and Thoreau, being in the same place on the same date. Though they never met, Muir would later absorb Thoreau's writing. Smith also takes us to Frank Lloyd Wright's home, Taliesin, in Spring Green, not far from the tracks of Thoreau and Mann. From a letter Wright wrote Walter Harding in 1952, which Smith discovered in the collections of Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods, we learn of Wright's esteem for Thoreau: "The history of American Architecture would be incomplete without Thoreau's wise observations on the subject" (321).

My favorite episode in Smith's book takes place on Mackinac Island in the straits between Lakes Michigan and Huron, a place that remains at peace even today because there are no automobiles. "They spent four days here," Smith writes (332), during which time Thoreau inventoried four notebook pages of plants. One hundred and forty-eight years later, in August 2009, speaking at the Mackinac Island Public Library, Smith was asked whether Thoreau had seen their exceptionally lush and celebrated lilacs. Smith did not recall. Later consulting her laptop transcript of Thoreau's notebook for 29 June 1861, she found the entry, "apple in bloom & lilac." She believed Thoreau was impressed with the lateness of their bloom on Mackinac compared to their mid-May flowering in Concord. Answering their other questions—how did the lilacs get to Mackinac and when—required a month's research. Smith concludes that New Englanders brought them and that "Thoreau's field notebook appears to be the earliest written documentation of the existence of lilacs on Mackinac Island."

Upon publication of *Westward I Go Free*, Smith revealed her own discovery, as she wrote me: "I quit my college library job. 30+ years of being a librarian is enough. I'm dedicating myself to my writing" (9 May 2012). I am thankful for this happy turn of events and look forward to whatever she writes next.

Additions to the Thoreau Bibliography

Robert N. Hudspeth

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We are indebted to Richard E. Winslow for information used in this *Bulletin*. Please keep your editor informed of items not yet added and new items as they appear.

Musings on Thoreau

Tom Potter

In the third chapter of *Walden*, Thoreau writes, "How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book!" How true these words are. At the age of five while sitting on Mrs. Murphy's lap, the words of my first book were read to me. My life was forever changed in an instant, and looking back I can trace my transcendental mindset to that very experience. The book was *The Prince and His Ants*, by Luigi Bertelli. (I wonder if E. O. Wilson read it?) Soon, more outdoor adventure books were read to me. Then, when I learned to read on my own, I pursued other volumes which most often led me out of doors at all hours. One evening in particular from my past comes to mind; I recall gazing up at the starry heavens and, like Thoreau, I could not count one star. That night sky was overwhelming. And I felt a part of all that I saw. Perhaps, even at that early age, I was experiencing Emerson's transparent eyeball.

Books and outdoor adventures continued to provide me with countless hours of both exploration of the natural world and things spiritual. Unbeknownst to me at the time, I was already starting a collection of books that would eventually become known to my friends as "The Potter Memorial Library."

At first the library was composed of natural history and science books with a few adventure stories thrown in. Much later, by way of Edwin Way Teale (the fourth president of the Thoreau Society) and Charles Darwin, I caught up with Thoreau. Yes, caught up with, for I had not been exposed to Henry in either high school or college literature classes. (Most likely I slept through that portion of my formal education.)

It didn't take long until Thoreau began to excite me. In him I felt a kinship with a spiritual brother who saw in nature, like I did, the wonder of a creative force beyond explanation. So I read more, far and wide, about Henry, his companions, his acquaintances, his interpreters. Then I began to meet people who, like me, chased after the illusive horse, dove, and hound—Henry. The Thoreau Society Annual Gatherings became a resource of knowledge, inspiration, and fellowship, and of course, BOOKS!

Books and more books; new books and used books. Each year at the Gathering, the authors appeared with new writings, lectures, and commentary. There I acquired many more books, often inscribed by the authors for me. Returning home, the new treasures would join the ones already on the shelves. Over time they became my daily reminder of friendships and past conversations with like-minded folks.

Now each time I enter the American Renaissance section of "The Potter Memorial Library," housed of course in our log home, I am greeted by old friends; Laura Walls, Joel Myerson, Bob Hudspeth, and Beth Witherell are all there. Others greet me: Dick Schneider, Bob Habich, and John Matteson. Larry Buell reminds me of Thoreau's natural world and Elise Lemire tells of the early days of dark Concord. There are friends, many others,



The Potter Memorial Library

including Kevin Van Anglen, Ron Bosco, and Sandy Petrulionis. What a treasure, these 4,000 to 5,000 books which now line the shelves. I only estimate that number of volumes, for I long ago gave up keeping count. Perhaps someday I will catalogue the collection, but for now I will just continue to enjoy the presence of so many printed texts. Oh, did I mention all of Joe Moldenhauer's work on the Princeton Edition? Also, I look to the shelves and there sit Reginald Cook, Sherman Paul, John Christie, and F. O. Matthiessen. And following a conversation with David Robinson at the Gathering this year I was able to continue our visit at home by going to the shelves for his book *Natural Life*.

I return often to my old friend Walter Harding with questions—he always has an answer for me as his words in *The Days of Henry Thoreau* again rise from the pages. And Bob Richardson is ready to help whenever I reach for *Henry Thoreau: A Life of the Mind*.

Each day, these folks greet me as I enter the library, and when I see at a glance their respective work, it reminds me of our shared conversations. Thus, I can not conceive of giving up the printed word, that warm feeling of a book resting next to the chair or bed as Thoreau mentioned. Henry loved books and read widely. Unlike his 200 unsold copies of his first book that surrounded him in his study, I have only three copies of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, but my three are well worn. Our shelves proudly display several collections of Thoreau's complete works, including four sets of the journals and his two late volumes recently edited by my dear friend Brad Dean.

So what are these musings about? Just this. I cannot imagine an empty room—one without books, the library replaced by a digital reader. For now, the only switch I turn on is one that illuminates the library shelves when I enter. At a glance I see the riches of friends and their words. The physical presence of the books provides for me a real awareness of where I have been and

with whom I have shared special moments. I can not conceive of a morning or evening without entering the library and holding in my hands for a few moments a physical communication from a friend or like-minded Thoreauvian. For all of you authors and friends, you enrich my life in untold ways. Keep writing; keep exploring Henry's mind; keep providing me your response to it so that I can build another set of shelves and give you your rightful place in our cabin in the woods.

Notes from Concord

Michael Frederick
Executive Director

When people ask me how many members the Society has, I explain to them that we are a relatively small organization with 1,200 members geographically expansive with current members living in all 50 US states and 20 countries globally. What is obvious to me is that Thoreau Society members are not interested in the superficial but instead have a deep and abiding interest in the life, works, and legacy of Henry D. Thoreau. Thoreau holds a special importance for most of us as members either professionally, personally, or, more likely, both.

I am including an updated version of our earlier spring appeal in this edition of the *Bulletin* as a reminder to all regarding our ongoing fundraising campaign. We continue to have many successes in Concord and beyond. We have streamlined our operations, cut waste, and have improved our lineup of programs and activities.

As a member, you value sharing ideas, but you also want to ensure your contribution creates positive value within your organization. Your support will help us maintain and improve our public programs, including our Window on Walden Authors Series

as well as our work with the Concord Historical Collaborative, the Thoreau Birth House, and Walden Pond State Reservation, (as the Friends of Walden Pond).

Through ongoing support from members like you, we continue to make improvements and expand our outreach activities incrementally.

- In July, the Society hosted its 71st Annual Gathering, Celebrating 150 Years of Thoreau's Life, Works, and Legacy, with Life Member Edward O. Wilson delivering the keynote address. It was a Concord-wide program of festivities, the largest Gathering since our 1991 Jubilee.
- We continue to improve the quality and scope of the Thoreau Society publications. In September, we will be mailing a double issue of the *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies*, which will make our journal up to date.
- The Society is currently pursuing several options that will enable us to deliver digital back issues of our publications and archival materials. We recently received funding through a Creative Economy Grant from the Office of the President at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell to remake the Society website. The new design will increase our capacity for public outreach and education, with a focus on building a climate-change curriculum that will be offered on the web and on the ground at Walden Pond.
- Perhaps the most pressing issue ahead for the Society is a planned visitor center at Walden Pond scheduled for completion in 2014. This proposed visitor center recently entered the design phase with the state's hiring of the Maryann Thompson architectural firm. The Friends of Walden Pond, an outreach division of the Thoreau Society, is working in collaboration with the Walden Pond Advisory Board and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to provide a meaningful contribution to the planning process as it progresses. The Society has been involved at the pond since 1941 and will continue to honor its mission to advocate for the preservation of Thoreau country.

We indeed need your support. As you well understand, Thoreau has the capacity to revolutionize the lives of individuals, who are the basis of every community, and ultimately the world.

Notes & Queries

Kurt Moellering

This edition of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* has somewhat of a cleaner and more modern look. This small makeover is the work of our new layout editor **Rob Velella**. Rob is an independent literary historian and playwright specializing in American literature of the nineteenth century. A frequent lecturer at museums, libraries, and historic sites, he also recently served as guest curator for "Margaret Fuller: Woman of the Nineteenth Century" at Harvard's Houghton Library in 2010. He holds a BA in American Literature from UMass Lowell and an MA in English and Publishing from Rosemont College. He also maintains the American Literary Blog (<http://www.americanliteraryblog.com>), an "almost-daily celebration of important (and not-so-important) dates in 19th-century American literary history."

Rob has tried to present a sharper visual aesthetic for the *Bulletin* while staying true to its rich history. His changes, though subtle overall, improve the overall look of this *Bulletin*. Please welcome him and feel free to send me feedback on the new look. He has helped me immensely as editor and I look forward to working with him more.

I am also excited to continue to showcase original artwork in this edition of the *Bulletin*. As in the last issue, you will find work from **John Teasely**. Additionally, this issue is publishing the original work of young artist **Will Close**. I had the privilege to teach Will last year when he was a ninth grader. Not only is he a gifted artist, but he was my foreman in our construction of a Thoreau replica cabin in Lincoln, Massachusetts.

One of the things that strikes me about this edition of the *Bulletin* is that it is evidence of the diversity of expertise Thoreau's body of work encourages. The variety of aspects of Thoreau's career that are investigated and celebrated in this issue is telling of just how multi-disciplinary Thoreau was well before that term became in vogue. In this issue we have our regular study of the natural history of Concord (**J. Walter Brain**); a close reading of one of Thoreau's expertly crafted, yet under-appreciated poems (**Sally Hansen**); evidence of the time-consuming process and painstaking efforts of the Thoreauvians who are entrusted with keeping the standards of scholarly editions of Thoreau's work (**Kevin Van Anglen**); as well as meditations on Thoreau as a teacher, Midwestern traveler, and mystical thinker (**Barry Andrews**, **Parker Huber**, and **Brianne Keith**).

Also note that this *Bulletin* marks the beginning of new Thoreau Society president **Michael Schleifer's** President's Column. There is a lively change of tone in Michael's column that I hope readers enjoy. But for those of you who have come to enjoy former president **Tom Potter's** thoughtful meditations on Thoreau as much as I have, you will be pleased to see that he has a column here as well, "Musings on Thoreau," which debuted in our previous issue.

Thanks to all who submitted to this *Bulletin*, and thanks to our proofreaders: **Bob Hudspeth**, **Dave Bonney**, **Brianne Keith**, **Nicholas Chase**, and **Ronald Hoag**. I would like to offer special thanks to **Beth Witherell** and **Mike Berger** for their help in preparing the essay "Thoreau's Careful Artistry in the Poem 'Smoke'"; additionally, Beth Witherell offered helpful suggestions and timely research in the preparation of "Inside the Princeton Edition."

The Reverend **Barry Andrews**, a long-time member of the Thoreau Society, is a retired Unitarian Universalist religious educator, author of *Thoreau as Spiritual Guide* and other books, and currently serves on the Thoreau Society Board of Directors. **K. P. Van Anglen** edited the Princeton Edition of Thoreau's *Translations*; he recently received the Walter Harding Award for Distinguished Public Service. **Sally Hansen** taught English for twenty-five years at Madison Technical College. She has an MA in English Literature from UW-Madison (1954), and her paper, "Teaching the Poetry of War," appeared in the *English Journal*, April 1970. **J. Parker Huber** is a long-time Thoreauvian and is best known as the author of the books *The Wildest Country: Exploring Thoreau's Maine* and *A Wanderer All My Days: John Muir in New England*; he lives in Brattleboro, Vermont. **J. Walter**

Brain lives in Lincoln, Massachusetts, at a crow's call from Walden Woods. **John Caffrey** is an artist/writer who lives in Northumberland, England; he is a life member of the Thoreau Society and has travelled widely in New England. **Will Close** is a 10th grader from Concord, MA. **Brianne Keith** is an editor, writer and longtime member of the Society.

Marty Howell wrote to me recently of a Thoreau-inspired beverage: "Enjoyed my first bottle of raw kombucha (a probiotic, fermented drink) the other day—my particular selection being 'Cosmic Cranberry.' The bottle label on this drink, sold by Millenium Products of Beverly Hills, CA, featured a 'Words of Enlightenment' quote (submitted by customers) from HDT, which I am unfamiliar with but presume to be excerpted from the Journals: 'Love is the wind, the tide, the waves, the sunshine.' The product website can be visited at: GTSkombucha.com." A quick Google search taught me that the quote is actually from an essay collected in Thoreau's *Reform Papers*, "Paradise (to be) Regained."

Mark Sullivan found a Thoreau poem in a recent catalogue of New York's Hawthorne Fine Art Gallery: "I was born upon thy bank, river / My blood flows in thy stream. / And thou meanderest forever / At the bottom of my dream / I was born upon thy bank, river." The exhibit, "Summer Reading: American Paintings and American Prose," links, according to Sullivan, "American landscape paintings that the gallery has for sale with quotes from famous American nature writers." The Thoreau poem is paired with a painting by Xanthus Smith, "Fishing Scene in Pennsylvania."

Bonita Robbins sent me a link to a story in the *Boston Globe* that mentioned Thoreau and the letter she wrote in response to that article, also published in the *Globe*. (**Mica Moellering** also pointed out the letter to me.) In the original *Globe* article (15 July, the final day of the Thoreau Society's Annual Gathering), Scott Van Voorhis reports on an estate sold in Concord for \$8.6 million dollars; he also mentions that the home is located in an area frequented by Thoreau. Robbins found the article so "'over the top' I wondered if the correspondent was being facetious or if he really was serious." This inspired Robbins to write a letter, which was published on July 22. In this letter, after she reminds readers of Thoreau's plea for simplicity, Robbins asks "why even bother to mention the hermit of Concord in an article that was so clearly targeted to the up-scale, high-end real estate market?"

Michael Berger found an essay in the *New Yorker* (July 30) that mentions Thoreau and other Concord luminaries several times. The article, "Pilgrim's Progress," "has some echoes of Thoreau's cultural history in *A Week*, with a discussion of the traits of the elite establishment in Concord, descendants of Puritans in their attitudes toward money and status, and the reaction of this community to the influx of new money, with different attitudes and behaviors. The article includes Sophia Hawthorne's wonderful description of Henry, Waldo, and Nathaniel ice skating."

Thanks to **Bob Hudspeth** for sending a couple of items our way. The summer 2011 journal *ISLE* printed a poem "Thoreau on Fire Island" by David Oates. And the *Atlantic Monthly* (May 2012) profiles Jonathan Blow's work to make his video game "The Witness" help move the video game industry towards a more artistic medium. The article notes the significance that *Walden* has had on his life.

Finally, **Dick Winslow** discovered Thoreau in the spring 2012 issue of *Lapham's Quarterly*. This special issue, "Means of Communication," consists of quoted passages from notables,

including Thoreau. *Lapham's* quotes several paragraphs from *Walden*. Dick also found a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article ("At Libraries, Quiet Makes a Comeback," July 20, 2012) that features Thoreau. Jennifer Howard's *Chronicle* article quotes William Powers's original article "Hamlet's Blackberry," previously cited in the *Bulletin*, which encourages us to "create distraction-free 'Walden zones,' at home and elsewhere, like Henry David Thoreau's retreats to the woods in search of peace and quiet."

President's Column

Michael Schleifer

My fellow Thoreuavians (how's that for presidential): Thank you again for your trust in electing me to this lofty position, however misguided your intentions may have been. I met many of you at last month's Annual Gathering, some for the first time and many for far more than that. The Gathering has become like summer camp for me the past eight years, getting to see so many of you every year and share our passion for all things—or at least some things—Thoreau. One significant difference from camp—the food is much better at the Gathering. And E. O. Wilson never spoke at my camp. Many thanks to executive director Mike Frederick and his staff for what was, by all accounts, the best AG in recent memory.

I often hear Thoreuavians, especially those who are new to the Society, make the observation that Henry would not approve of this society's existence. This was my initial response too. At the business meeting, I noted the irony of an organization devoted to a man who abhorred organizations. However, I also noted on that hot and humid day last month, why should we care what he would think of us? So here we are, paying homage to him and endlessly researching his works, looking for clarified or new meaning.

When I joined this organization in 2004, I assumed that it was composed primarily of scholars. Indeed, at my first Annual Gathering and board meeting, that assumption seemed valid. Being a *nouveau* Thoreuavian (trying saying that three times fast), most of the presentations sailed over me, and I found staying focused on them a challenge. At the very first presentation I attended, a roundtable discussion ensued and I was stunned to hear others say what, despite my admiration for Henry, I had felt for the 30 years I had struggled to read him: reading Thoreau was tedious and boring. Why should I care that it cost him \$28.12 ½ cents to build his cabin? Like many in the intellectually lazy underclass, I knew Thoreau from quote books. To say that this has changed radically thanks to my involvement in the Society is a gross understatement, and I can thankfully report that four years later I finally read *Walden* cover to cover for the first time. It surely will not be the last.

Those who speak for a living have observed that the shorter the length of their presentation the more time is needed in preparation. Seems like one of those oxymorons I'm always hearing about. (Jumbo shrimp anyone?) During the time I spent thinking of what I would say at the annual business meeting, one oxymoronic phrase came to mind. I found it again reviewing my notes when I came home: typical Thoreuavian. How could there be such a thing? The term never made it into my remarks but remained on my mind in the weeks after the Gathering.

As is my custom whenever I visit Concord, I made several

purchases at the Shop at Walden Pond. For a mere \$5, I picked up a copy of Walter Harding's essay on Thoreau and children. Though I have yet to read the text, I did read Allen Harding's delightful introduction, and there it was on page 9: "In meeting Thoreau enthusiasts at the annual Thoreau Society Gatherings I am always amazed at the diversity of their careers and life styles." Hey, didn't I have that same thought just a few days ago?

Toward the end of the "Economy" chapter, Henry makes clear his desire that "there may be as many different persons in the world as possible." Perhaps he would approve of us after all.

Winners of the 2012 Thoreau Society Fellowship

James Finley,
University of New Hampshire
Brent T. Ranalli,
The Cadmus Group

Winners of the 2012 Thoreau Society Awards

Tom Potter,
The Thoreau Society Medal
Dale Schwie,
*The Thoreau Society
Distinguished Service Award*
Kevin Van Anglen,
*The Walter Harding
Distinguished Service Award*

Please submit items for the winter *Bulletin*
to your editor before October 15, 2012
kurt.moellering@thoreausociety.org

Although exceptions will occasionally be made for longer pieces, in general articles and reviews should be no longer than 1500 words. Longer submissions may be forwarded by the editor to the *Concord Saunterer*. All submissions should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The Thoreau Edition texts (Princeton University Press) should be used as the standard for quotations from Thoreau's writings, when possible. Contributors need not be members of the Thoreau Society, but all non-members are heartily encouraged to join.

The *Thoreau Society Bulletin* is a quarterly publication containing Thoreau Society news, additions to the Thoreau bibliography, and short articles about Thoreau and related topics. It is indexed in *American Humanities Index* and *MLA International Bibliography*.

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Established in 1941, **The Thoreau Society, Inc.**TM is an international nonprofit organization with a mission to stimulate interest in and foster education about Thoreau's life, works, legacy, and his place in his world and in ours, challenging all to live a deliberate, considered life. The Thoreau SocietyTM has the following organizational goals:

- To encourage research on Thoreau's life and works and to act as a repository for Thoreau-related materials
- To educate the public about Thoreau's ideas and their application to contemporary life
- To preserve Thoreau's legacy and advocate for the preservation of Thoreau country

Membership in the Society includes subscriptions to its two publications, the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (published quarterly) and *The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* (published annually). Society members receive a 10% discount on all merchandise purchased from The Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond and advance notice about Society programs, including the Annual Gathering.

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